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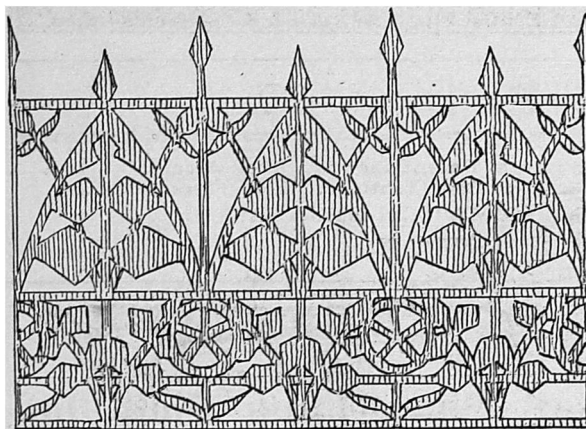
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ODDS AND ENDS.

SOME very clever work is being done in our schools of design, and the average of the drawings that I have seen is rapidly approaching the standard of excellence attained in the best foreign schools. There is no reason why we should not have as good and as original designers and decorators here as in England. The pupils, as a rule, are bright, energetic, and if, as Americans, they have not quite the spontaneity in their work that is shown by artists of older nations, they have the wish and the spirit that will soon achieve it. Indeed, when we consider how young we are in art, it is really surprising that we have accomplished so much. Decorative designing is really one of the best tests of an artist's readiness and originality. Anybody can make a worse or better copy of a group or object, but to create, to adapt, to gracefully unite forms, requires previous study and a nice and accurate hand. The accompanying illustrations were kindly drawn for me by one of the lads in the Boston School of Art—a lad whose modesty and merit entitle him to have due credit for his design—Master Willie Skinner. As he is in only his second year of study and showed no particular aptitude for art before entering the school, the illustrations show what can be accomplished by systematic study and practice in developing latent talent. It is not necessary to cite the example of England in speaking of the use of encouraging home art as well as home manufactures, for everybody who takes an interest in the subject remembers the immense saving effected in that country every year by training its own designers. The money now saved was formerly paid over to Belgian, French, German and Italian decorators. In America, just now, we put a premium on foreign art by neglecting our own. But it will not be so much longer when our lads and misses can be so readily transformed into artists and decorators, as experiments in Boston, New York, and Cincinnati show that they can be, we may hope for the best results.

SOMEBODY has recently been inditing a tirade against the Gothic style in libraries. Now it seems to me that if there is one thing next to a church where the Gothic style is appropriate it is in the library. Perhaps I feel the more strongly on this point because I used to subscribe to a library luxuriously housed in Gothic, and spent many hours in the



serenity of a reading room, windowed, and ceiled, and columned in Gothic style. I also occupied, during a residence of some years in a roomy old New England mansion, the Gothic room constructed for the library of the statesman who built it. There was something in the associations of the place, something in the rich and sombre carvings of the oaken window cases, door frames, and stationary book shelves, something in the quiet and half-light, something in the limited window view which disposed the mind to study and kept my thoughts from wandering away to other things. A well-known critic and literary adviser recommends that books should be read only in places where the mind will be inapt to suffer diversion by a multitude of things that call for ocular or auricular notice. His ideal study would be the bare garret of a German philosopher; bare walls, bare floor, bare table, high window, a broken chair, and no ornament but a book. Such a study was Goethe's, and, doubtless, many of us can bear witness to the clearness with which books talk to us when they have no rivals for our attention. Some of my best reading I did in the cobwebby, six by nine weigh-house of a coal yard, in the intervals of weighing loads of anthracite. There was nothing in the place but a scale rod, a slate, and a chair, and there was but one door and one window. I have often envied the reading advantages enjoyed by Thoreau in his little unadorned cabin in the woods. But we have social and domestic duties to perform that are commonly supposed to transcend our individual preferences and our intellectual obligations, and we can hardly invite our wives, and children, and friends to the examination of our bookish treasures if they are stored away in otherwise empty garrets. We do wisely, therefore, in apportioning some corners of our houses to the safe keeping and convenient reference of books. And when we consider that books are the essence of the greatest brains, that they are the deepest wisdom, the most graceful fancy, the most tolerant friends and considerate acquaintances, it is granting but little return for their benefit to us to clothe them tastefully and house them soundly and well. The sobriety and dignity of the Gothic style fit it well for the cloister-like

seclusion of the library. There is something in it that overmasters one, and disposes the mind to quiet and to meditation. The monks of old builded well when they built in Gothic. Perhaps some of the literary saints who had their training in convent and cathedral, owed something of the turn of their minds to the suggestions of their environment.

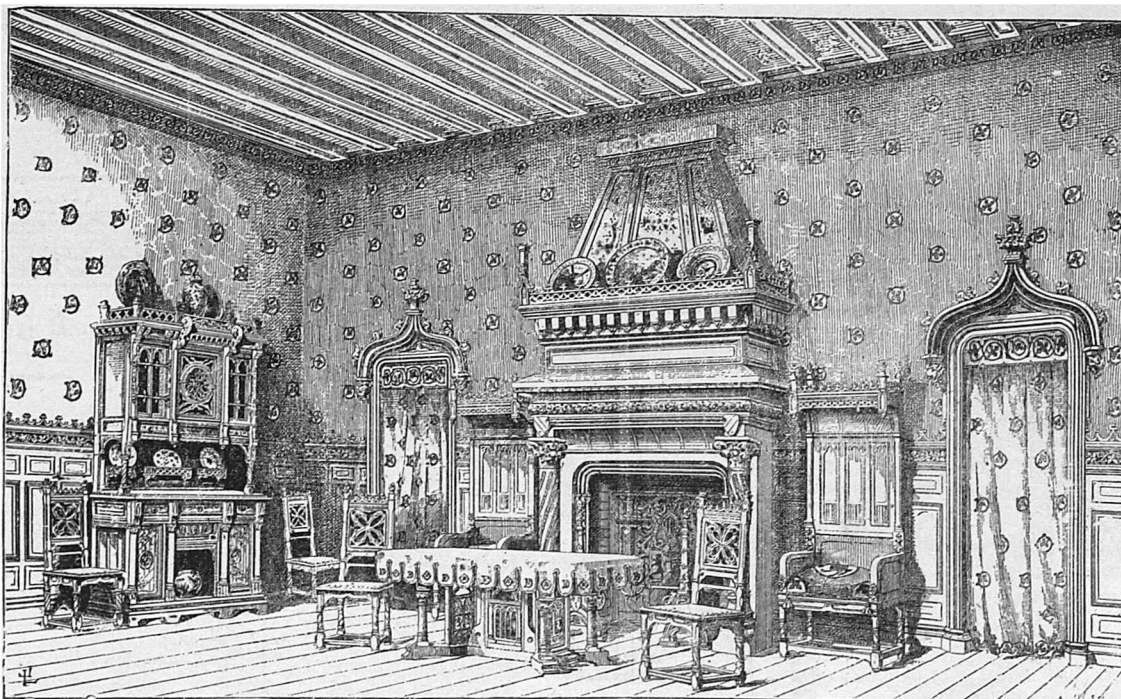
THAT big Foreign Exhibition in Boston—in itself a wondrously decorative thing—offered some useful points to our decorative artists in the exquisite stained glass, tapestries, enamels, porcelains, carvings, bronzes, electrotypes, repousse, and jewelry. Yet I was surprised at myself that I did not "enthuse" to a greater extent over certain of the exhibits that were every bit as good, and were indeed the same, perhaps, as those shown in the Centennial Exhibition. I can only account for it on the supposition that we have been catching up with the foreigners since 1876, and that they have in that period made but a relatively small advance. But there were some things there well worth studying. The pavilion of Morris & Co., with its little rooms hung in textiles of different pattern and color, but all delicate, soft, and pleasing to the eye, was one of the notable features of the exhibition. It proved conclusively that we can, to use a paradox, paper our walls with cloth, to great advantage. Mr. Morris, who is better known as a poet than as a decorator and furnisher, has shown a very refined taste in his textile decorations. The tints are all subdued, and the patterns are usually wrought into the body tint with colors harmonious therewith, or else in lighter or darker shades of the same color. The advantage of these hangings is that they can be taken down and cleaned and can be taken away whenever the tenant moves, that is, if he owns them. How a drawing-room would look in them I hardly know, but for a bed-room or boudoir nothing could be neater, daintier, or more charming, and when the pictures and brackets and other little home knick-knacks are in place against these hangings, the effect must be exquisite. For beauty of tone and effect, these cloths surpass the glossy and showy papers with their profusion of colors and gilding, and especially when lightly plaited, they remove the hard angularity of the walls. The prices are said to be those of costly wall papers, but even were that so, they give a better effect for the same money.

THERE is reason for genuine regret, if what William Morris, the poet, politician, artist, designer and Utopian, says be true. And although he says it as prologue to an advertisement for his carpets, there is no reason to suppose that he would deliberately falsify. He says: "It is a lamentable fact that, just when we of the West are beginning to understand and admire the art of the East, that art is fading away, nor in any branch has the deterioration been more marked than in carpet making. All beauty of color has now (and for long) disappeared from the manufacturers of the Levant—the once harmonious and lovely Turkey carpets. The traditions of excellence of the Indian carpets are only kept up by a few tasteful and energetic providers in England with infinite trouble and at a great expense, while the mass of the goods are already inferior in many respects to what can be turned out mechanically from the looms of Glasgow or Kidderminster. As for Persia, the mother of this beautiful art, nothing could mark the contrast between the past and the present, clearer than the carpets, doubtless picked for excellence of manufacture, given to the South Kensington Museum by His Majesty the Shah, compared with the rough work of the tribes done within the last hundred years, which the directors of the museum have judiciously hung near them. In short, the art of carpet making, in common with the other special arts of the East, is either dead or dying fast, and it is clear to every one that, whatever future is in store for those countries where it once flourished, they will, in time to come, receive all influence from, rather than give any to, the West." This is truly a matter to deplore, for if Orientals seek to draw inspiration for their work from European designers, their drawing is so poor that they can only parody the art of Europe, whereas their art is now sufficient unto itself. It is pre-eminently an art of color and decoration. The spirit of commercial rivalry, which sometimes works as many curses as benefits, is, doubtless, responsible for this decline. I differ with Mr. Morris when he says of his new hand-made rugs and

carpets that "they should, by no means, imitate the Eastern ones in design, but show themselves obviously to be the outcome of modern and Western ideas." That is to say, I differ from this view if, as I understand, he wishes to engraft upon a form of domestic art the spirit and methods of a foreign one. While he is to be commended for undertaking new forms, is it not possible that he can preserve some of the beautiful patterns and textures that, he says, are perishing and threaten soon to become mere relics of lost arts? Let him make the one as well as the other. Let him save the Orientals from themselves by showing that he can not only adapt from them but can rival them on their own ground. Thereby he may inspire them to return to their half-abandoned or vulgarized arts and manufactures, and keep alive those artistic traditions, the loss of which would be as much a cause for regret as is the whitewashing of the Alhambra by Spanish monks.

MR. A. A. ANDERSON, one of our bright, alert, young painters, who has resources enough to enable him to accomplish large undertakings, without frequent pauses to make "pot boilers," recently gave a gratifying display of his work at the American Art Gallery. The work was mainly decorative, comprising panels representing the seasons, and idealized dinner courses, for breakfast and dining rooms, and he showed two large and gracefully executed ceilings for Fifth Avenue houses, one to match a Renaissance parlor, and the other to adorn a Louis XVI. drawing-room. The Renaissance parlor, for such the ceiling was, showed three nymphs seated on a throne of cloud, and *amoretto*, chubby little fellows sporting in the air above them. The picture was necessarily painted in a warm key to give light to the ceiling, and Mr. Anderson is one of the few men who can paint a warm blue. Light warm colors also add to the apparent dimensions of a room. Still the situation of a room must be considered, for apartments fronting on a street paved with shiny granite and blue stone sometimes have lights reflected through the windows upon their ceilings that give increased vivacity to the colors there, and gas lights make them brighter. The Louis XVI. ceiling is simpler, though not less attractive. It shows a space of warm sky across which light puffs of cloud are rolling, and little cupids are frolicking about among these vapory groups, casting flowers at each other and lassoeing one another with pink ribbons. Conventional theme, you will say, to be sure, but conventional because it is made to match a style made conventional by a century of copying and imitation. What I wished to emphasize was the fanciful treatment, the agreeable color, the trained technique, and the fact that our artists no longer deem it a descent from the sphere of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good—always in capitals—to engage in purely decorative work. When more of them follow Mr. Anderson's example the beauty of our domestic interiors will be much enhanced.

WE Americans are nomads. It is doubtful if half of us could be persuaded to forego our annual May moving by a present of the houses that we move away from. In view of this fact, is it not rather odd that something has not been done to ameliorate the condition of those uneasy people who are forever shifting about, generally without changing for the better? The loss and breakage incident to a periodical migration are, of course, impossible to foresee and avoid, but in forsaking a pleasant home for one less pleasant are we always to be unable to compensate for the removal? We take our furniture and dishes to our new quarters, but we leave our wall paper, frescos, gas fixtures, dados, friezes, stucco work, and mouldings, and take up our abodes in meagrely decorated rooms, the cost of whose rehabilitation out-balances any pecuniary advantage gained through the removal. There is the item of wall paper. Why should we not tack these papers to the wall and remove them with our stoves and tables? We can do it. Just glance in at R. Swain Gifford's studio if you want to see how it is done. I don't know that he will thank me for this suggestion, but he is a patient man, and solicitous for the esthetic and economic welfare of his fellow mortals. The way he manages is this: he buys a quantity of "Japanese" wall paper—I quote the designation because the article is made in Paris—and tacks the strips to his walls, joining them neatly at the edges, "and there you are."



GOTHIC DINING-ROOM.